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A
HISTORY OF RELIGIONS.

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A Condensed Statement of the Results of

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

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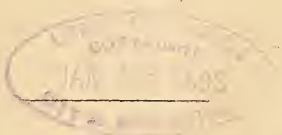
PHILOSOPHICAL CRITICISM.

BY

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Miss ELIZABETH E. EVANS.

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A HISTORY OF RELIGIONS.

Anantasastram bahulascha vidyah alpascha kalo
bahuvigñata cha; yatsarabhutam tadupasaniyam.

—*Vṛiddha-chāṇakya*, xv, 10.

“Books are innumerable; sciences are many; life is short and hindrances are frequent: seek therefore the essence of knowledge.”

“Each temple with new weight of idols nods,
And borrowed altars smoke to other gods.”

.
Astarte shines in Jewish Mary's fame
Still Queen of Heaven, another and the same.”

—HORACE WALPOLE.

“The end of man, according to the Stoics, is not to find peace, either in life or in death. It is to do his duty and to tell the truth.”—LECKY.

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PREFACE.

THIS book offers to the public a condensed statement of the results of scientific research and philosophical criticism, as applied to the history of religion.

The facts quoted are drawn from various works in various languages, European and Oriental—works which are inaccessible to the majority of readers, while many who might obtain them have no time to master their extensive details and elaborate arguments.

The conclusions express the deliberate and earnest convictions of the writer—convictions held in common with free-thinkers not a few, and which a still greater number of thinkers not free accept in secret, while outwardly refraining from

any expression of sympathy with such ideas.

Many of the statements concerning ancient superstitions, and their correspondence with more modern dogmas, are likely to be contradicted—by the unlearned, because they will not have it that these things are so; by the learned, because few scholars are sufficiently free from religious prejudice not to entertain fixed views, with which all new discoveries must be made to harmonize.

It cannot be denied that in the department of Biblical criticism an immense amount of falsehood has been accepted in support of established notions, and a great deal of truth suppressed or distorted, whenever its honest consideration has seemed to militate against the text of Scripture, or the interpretation of favorite commentators.

As a specimen of the one-sided and utterly unscholarly method which is often resorted to when religious questions are

under discussion, take the following quotation from Townsend's "Historical and Chronological Arrangement of the Old and New Testaments"—a work which is an acknowledged authority among English divines, and from which is drawn a large portion of the information used in the religious instruction of Protestant youth. After asserting that the Book of Job was obtained by Moses while in Midian and by him, with some alterations, addressed to the Israelites, the author says:

"My chief reason for assigning to the Book of Job its present date (B.C. 2337) is derived from a consideration of the manner in which God had condescended to deal with mankind. Idolatry, as we read in the preceding part of this period, had occasioned the dispersion from Babel. It was gradually encroaching still farther on every family which had not yet lost the knowledge of the true God. Whoever has studied the conduct of

Providence will have observed that God has never left himself without a witness in the world to the truth of his religion.

“To the old world, Noah was a preacher and a witness; to the latter times of patriarchy, Abraham and his descendants; to the ages of the Levitical law, Moses, David, and the Prophets; and to the first ages of Christianity, the apostles and martyrs were severally witnesses of the truth of God. But we have no account whatever, unless Job be the man, that any faithful confessor of the one true God arose between the dispersion from Babel and the call of Abraham. If it be said that the family of Shem was the visible church of that age, it may be answered that it is doubtful whether even this family were not idolatrous; for Joshua told the Israelites that the ancestors of Abraham were worshipers of images.”

Was ever comment so void of all the qualities which give value to criticism?

Alas! Yes: such specimens of reasoning abound in theological lore. Special pleadings, gratuitous assumptions, and illogical inferences of this kind corrupt the earliest and highest sources of Scriptural hermeneutics and Christian polemics. Thus, Origen, the father of Biblical exegetics, and the first defender of the faith, in his attempt to refute the assertion of Celsus, that, according to a current Jewish tradition, Jesus was the natural son of a Roman soldier named Panthera, declares that so pure-minded and benevolent a being could not have been a bastard, because bastards are especially tainted with evil tendencies; and then adduces, as his chief argument, the necessity of Jesus being miraculously conceived and born of a virgin, because Isaiah (vii, 14) had prophesied that the future Messiah should be thus incarnated."

And it is not alone the bigoted and the ignorant of the present day who

deal thus unfairly. Many really learned and comparatively liberal-minded writers are induced, either through their own beliefs, or through fear of offending the prevailing religious sentiment, to give a wrong coloring to facts which cannot be entirely ignored.

Hence the erroneous estimate of the Hebrew theocracy, as compared with the ancient religions of Egypt, Assyria, and Greece; hence the limited ideas concerning the doctrine of Confucius, Zarathustra, Buddha, and other reformers; hence the force of many absurd aphorisms, such as: "*Socrates died like a philosopher, Jesus Christ like a God*;" hence the depreciation of the moral teachings of Epicuretus, Antoninus, and other "heathen" exemplars.

These remarks apply especially to the treasures of Indian literature, now being brought into notice through translations by Sanskrit scholars.

Although the acquirement of knowl-

edge from this source must necessarily be slow, it is safe to say that if the acquisitions therefrom, as regards the science of Religions, were as confirmatory as they are destructive of the claims of Christianity, the world would by this time be much better acquainted than it is with the contents of the Vedas and the Indian epics. As the matter now stands, there is a manifest reluctance to popularize the most striking characteristics of these remarkable writings, while the coincidences which are acknowledged are so explained away in the light of "*the right religion, which is OURS,*" that few readers are startled or puzzled by what is placed before them upon this subject.

There are books which tell the truth and the whole truth, so far as it is known, in relation to these matters, and which do not hesitate to accept the conclusions made necessary by the facts; but such books are not usually promi-

nent upon booksellers' shelves, and are seldom quoted by divines in their sermons. Their authors are either true scholars, searching for knowledge and fearless of results; or professed free-thinkers, glad of every weapon which can be used against an established creed. Either character is dangerous, and to be avoided by him who would preserve his faith unshaken; consequently, only those commentators upon Indian literature are popular who are careful to supplement every damaging statement by a pious reference to the "one true faith," and who, in the face of probability and of evidence, boldly relegate to the first centuries of the Christian era all myths which appear to contain the original material of the miraculous story of Christ.

Krishna, the black god of India, is indeed the *bête-noir* of orthodox Orientalists.

And for scholars who take a more general survey of the history of religion,

there are Osiris and Mithra and Thammuz and Adonis and a host of other embodiments of the sun's career, each and all bearing an astonishing family likeness to that character compounded of folk-lore and philosophical dream which for nearly two thousand years has borne the sins and carried the infirmities of Christianity, and now shows signs of giving way entirely under the overwhelming burden.

The only work known to the writer which, from the standpoint of belief in Christianity and the Church, deals fairly with history, and admits the significance of heathen myths when compared with the story of Christ, is that remarkable book, "The Keys of the Creeds," recently published anonymously. Its author is evidently able to calculate all the phases of the present crisis in religious thought, and he hastens to present what is really the strongest and safest plea in favor of a system which, often desperately assaulted by argument,

is now threatened with utter destruction by facts.

And what is this plea?

The assertion that the Church is necessary for the cultivation of the ideal in man; although, so far as the real is concerned, all creeds are alike false.

And this is the utmost that Christianity has to offer!

A HISTORY OF RELIGIONS.

THE ORIGIN OF THE RACE.

CONCERNING the origin of the human race, nothing is positively known.

The most recent scientific discoveries tend to establish the theory that man is a development of the ape, through numerous intervening types, some of which have disappeared from the earth.

The legends of many savage tribes describe the manner in which their ancestors were gradually evolved out of the lower forms of animal life, and thus the testimony of mythology corresponds with the results of scientific research.

Even the Hebrew story of creation confirms, so far as such a tradition can be said to have any confirmatory force, the theory of the low origin of mankind. To be naked and not ashamed implies a very primitive stage of barbarism, and the next step in advance is the making of aprons of leaves and coats of the skins of wild beasts.

IMMORTALITY.

THE belief has long been prevalent that man is a compound of body, mind, and spirit, and that the mind (that is, the thinking power) and the spirit (that is, the conscience) survive the decay of the body. But every new discovery in pathological and organic science appears to demonstrate the identity and indivisibility of all the powers and functions of man, and to limit their existence and action to the period of individual life in the mortal body. In the present devel-

opment of science, a final solution of the problem is not possible.

The idea of immortality originated from man's dissatisfaction with the short span and heavy troubles of earthly life, and from his sense of justice, which demands that wrong shall not always go unpunished, nor virtue be unrewarded in the end. It was the idea of a developed moral sense.

There are some tribes of savages who have no conception of a future state, and there is no trace of the belief in the earlier records of the Hebrews.

The Indian theory of Metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls, is probably the first expression of the idea, and its culminating feature, the final absorption of the purified spirit into the Original Essence, has been, in every age, and is still, a satisfactory explanation of the

mystery to many minds which have not been able to accept the theory of continued individual consciousness.

The Indian system of philosophy granted souls to the lower animals. The Christian system of religion has confined the spiritual nature to human beings.

The results of scientific investigation go to establish the principle that the difference between the mental and moral faculties of man and those of the inferior animals is in degree rather than in kind.

The instinctive desire for and the general belief in immortality are not proofs of the truth of the doctrine. We desire immortality because we are unwilling to die; and we believe in it because we are taught from infancy to do so, our minds being predisposed to the idea through the transmitted influence of many generations of believing ancestors.

At the present time, many persons hold, in place of the Christian doctrine of the immortality of the individual soul, a belief in the immortality of the race. Each individual exerts a certain amount of influence, which is never lost, but goes to make up the average standard of his generation, and through that concentrated influence to affect the progress of all succeeding generations.

But, except in moments of great exaltation of feeling and of profound self-sacrifice, this theory is not satisfying.

The heart of man cries out for reunion with departed loved ones, and the mind of man desires continued activity, under more perfect conditions than earthly life can offer. Besides, a sense of justice seems to demand a future reward for present honest endeavor. The men and women who labor most earnestly and wisely for their fellows are always in advance of their time, and, therefore, not only do their work under many hin-

drances, but are obliged to leave it unfinished and die in doubt as to its ultimate success.

Still, the craving for a future development of our faculties is no proof that an opportunity for such development awaits us in another state of existence. These feelings may be only the natural sequence of our present powers.

Love is an eternal impulse in the race; therefore it will not consent to the annihilation of a chosen object, and the intellect being constituted for incessant activity refuses to conceive of rest.

With regard to this mysterious question it may be said that while we need not check all our dreams of future and endless happiness, we have no right to shape our lives with any reference to what may or may not be our condition hereafter. Our present work is in this world, and the habit of looking beyond involves not only a waste of time, but

an obscuration of the duties that lie close about us.

Talk of immortality as much as we may, our minds are really as incapable of conceiving the idea of the eternity of spirit as of the eternity of matter.

As in all forms of religious credulity, so, in the anticipation of a future existence, the barbarians' faith is simple and unquestioning. It never occurs to him to doubt the tradition of his tribe on this point. The strength of this feeling explains the readiness with which members of savage or semi-civilized communities sacrifice themselves to the gods, and accounts also for their bravery in battle and contempt of death. The pagan Germans and Gauls had such an unwavering conviction of a life after death that they even made contracts on the basis of this belief, and accepted promises to pay in the next world.

With the intellectual development of the race and the culture of the individual, the faith in immortality grows weaker. Absolute certainty gives place to a more or less probable conjecture, and possibility of other-worldly requitals ceases to influence human action. Men "jump the life to come," and regulate their conduct, either for the promotion of their earthly interest, or according to an ideal standard of right, without "respect unto the recompense of the reward."

WORSHIP.

THERE is as yet no proof of the existence of any personal intelligence behind the system of law which regulates the universe.

The idea of a God originated from the fears of man in the presence of natural forces which he is unable to control.

As man became developed in the capacity to think and to reason, he naturally associated a personal form with each of the impersonal agencies in action around him, and classed these imaginary beings as friends or enemies, according as their functions resulted in benefit or in injury to himself.

The number of superior powers would gradually be lessened as man observed that many phenomena were due to one and the same source.

In time, and under certain modifications of character, the conception of a sole ruler of the universe would become possible.

It is not yet known whether the adoration of the creative function in man preceded or followed the worship of the powers of external nature. Both cults originated at a very early stage of human

development, and the ideas pertaining to each were often intermingled.

The sun being to dwellers on earth the largest object in the heavens, the chief embodiment of the principle of life, the great dispenser of good and disperser of evil, became the prevailing deity of primitive worship among all people.

All ancient myths and symbols have reference to GENERATION, and all later religions are developments, more or less spiritual, of this original idea.

The analogy between the reproductive power of human beings and of the earth led naturally to the personification of the elements and of the heavenly bodies.

The idea of a trinity of gods is founded upon the triple form of the male organs of generation; the idea of the unity of God has reference to the physiological

structure of the female; the three in one means the union of the male and female energies in the process of generation.

In primitive times the male organ, as the symbol of creative force, was worshiped in the form of a radiant pillar—proving that the worship of the sun and of fire were developed from the same idea.

Out of this symbol grew the spire, the tower, the minaret, and the cross, as indicative of the male potency; just as the circle, the oval, the cave, the chasm, the ark, the ship, the door, became symbols of the feminine agency in the act of creation.

In the same way the sun was chosen as the emblem of masculine force, while the moon and the earth represented the reflected power and receptive fecundity illustrative of the feminine function.

Later, these attributes were personified in allegorical characters, such as : Jah, Jupiter, Baal, Osiris, Thammuz, Odin, Thor, for the male element, and Isis, Astarte, Maya, Venus, Diana, Mary, for the female element; while Elohim, Baalim, Arba, the bearded Venus, the feminine Jove, Isis and Horus, the Virgin and Child represented androgynous deities, and also suggested sexual union as a fundamental law of nature.

The circle including a triangle, the handled cross, the key surmounted by a crescent, the complicated cross, and the double triangle are emblems of androgynous deities, and refer to the power of independent creation, supposed to be inherent in both male and female divinities.

The choice between the masculine and feminine elements as the chief object of adoration depended upon the character of the worshipers. The Jews, a warlike

people, who greatly preferred male children, worshiped a masculine deity; while in some parts of India, the Sakti were preferred to Siva; and Isis, not Osiris, was the favorite god of Egypt.

The same distinction is shown even now in Christianity, especially in the Romish Church, where, in general, the worship of the Virgin has almost superseded that of the Trinity; although the Jesuits and their feminine complement, the "Order of the Sacred Heart," show a strong preference for a masculine deity in their almost exclusive adoration of Jesus.

The Shakers also are worshipers of the feminine element in their adoration of Ann Lee.

THE HINDU TRINITY.

ALL developed religions are essentially monotheistic. However numerous may be the celestial hierarchy in any cult,

it is sure to contain the ultimate idea of a single supreme power—the source and completion of all other powers and the object of the worshiper's highest reverence. It is the expression of the various ideas respecting God that gives to each cult the appearance of polytheism. The stronger the force of imagination in a race or people, the greater will be the tendency to personification and allegory in the description of natural phenomena and the establishment of religious theories, and the division of doctrines into esoteric and exoteric increases the mystification.

In India, the Divine Unity is worshiped in Brahma, who is never represented by images or symbols.

The Hindu Trinity, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, the intellectual transfiguration of the triple *phallus*, are not only masculine personifications, supplemented by

the feminine element—they also stand respectively for power, wisdom, justice; creation, preservation, destruction (or change); matter, spirit, time; the past, the present, the future; earth, water, fire.

Of these deities Brahma is scarcely regarded, his work having been accomplished in the creation of matter.

The religious world of India is at present divided into two sects, the worshipers of Vishnu and the worshipers of Siva, Vishnu being the prevailing deity, as he possesses the attributes of Siva, while the followers of Krishna and of Buddha really worship Vishnu in his incarnations.

KRISHNA.

KRISHNA, the eighth and most complete incarnation of Vishnu, is the favorite deity of the Hindus. His mother

was Devaki, a woman of superhuman purity, wife of Vasudeva and sister of Kausa, the Rajah of Mathura. A prophet having foretold that the infant would eventually usurp the throne, the Rajah sought to destroy him at his birth, and, failing to find him, issued a decree commanding all the children of the same age throughout the kingdom to be slain. The gods having interfered to preserve the prince, he was secretly carried beyond the boundaries and left in the care of friendly shepherds until he grew up, when he fulfilled the prophecy by destroying his uncle. He afterward became a famous warrior, and through supernatural gifts was constantly victorious over his enemies. One of his most remarkable exploits was the slaying of a terrible serpent by crushing its head with his foot. In some pictures he is represented as treading upon the neck of a serpent, whose head is uplifted in an attempt to bite its destroyer's heel.

At a later period Krishna is represented as the Supreme God. In human disguise he mingled with the people, doing good to all and teaching by parable and precept the purest morality to the crowds that followed him.

But besides his more simple instructions to the poor and the ignorant, Krishna expounded the doctrines of an abstruse philosophy to his favorite companion and disciple Arjuna, before whom he was also transfigured, appearing in the splendor of his divine majesty, whereby Arjuna was overwhelmed with awe and implored his Master to resume his human shape.

The legends concerning Krishna are endless in number and extremely diverse in character.

At his birth he was saluted by a choir of angels; his body illuminated the dungeon in which he was born.

In reference to his early pastoral life, and to his later career of beneficence, he was called the Good Shepherd. He cured a leper by his miraculous power. A sorrowful woman emptied a box of precious ointment upon his head, and he rewarded the reverential act by the removal of her sterility.

There are various accounts of Krishna's death. One legend asserts that, while performing his religious duties upon the banks of the Ganges, he was shot by a hunter, who mistook him for a deer; another, that he was transfixed to a tree by the arrow of an enemy; another, that he was crucified. He is spoken of as absorbed at once into the Eternal Essence, and also as having descended into hell and afterward ascended into heaven.

At Mathura he has a temple built in the form of a cross. He is painted as

Vishnu, crucified, with a Parthian coronet around his head. There are many pictures of him at Wittoba. Some of these have the *stigmata* in the hands, others in the feet; one has a collar around the neck with a heart suspended from it, a hole in the side of the figure and upon the head a phallic sign. Another picture represents him struggling with a seven-headed serpent.

It is probable that Krishna is the sun. His name, which is usually translated *black*, means also *dark blue*, which might imply the god of the air (or sky), and of the sun, as the chief object in the heavens.

It is possible that the heroic deeds or exceptional goodness of some one man is the nucleus of this stupendous myth; but more probable that the power and beneficent influences of the sun are thus indicated. There are, in fact, pict-

ures of Krishna as the sun, with his favorite wife Radha, as the moon, beside him, while a circle of youths and maidens, representing the zodiac, dance around the pair to the music of Krishna's flute.

The licentious stories of the loves of Krishna are undoubtedly allegorical, and the impure worship which has resulted from their literal acceptance is no reproach to their original intent. The real idea of these fanciful compositions is the reciprocal attraction between divine goodness and the human soul, and there is no more inconsistency between the language and its figurative meaning than between the luscious descriptions of Solomon's Song and the pious rendering given them by commentators.

The representation of Krishna as crucified would seem to imply his identification with the sun. The Romans rev-

erenced a crucified incarnation of the god Sol, and many ancient Italian pictures of Jesus as a crucified Saviour bear the inscription, *Deo soli*, which signifies "to the only God," and "to the God Sol."

A votive offering to the Assyrian Sun-God represents a man surrounded by a wreath of beams, with outstretched arms, each hand containing a branch, thus forming a perfect cross. The inscription is: "*Domino Baali, Solari Regi, æterno qui exaudivit preces.*" "To the Lord Baal, the Solar King, eternal, who has heard prayers."

In some aspects of his character Krishna resembles Apollo, in others Hercules, both representations of the sun; while it is obvious that there is still a more striking likeness between this incarnation of Vishnu and the second person of the Christian Trinity, called by his worshippers "the Sun of Righteousness."

It is impossible that the heathen myths, which so closely resemble those of Judaism and Christianity, can have been borrowed from the Jewish Scriptures and the New Testament. The internal evidence of the oldest Hebrew books proves them to have been written within less than a thousand years before the Christian era, and history shows that India, Persia, Assyria, and Greece were highly civilized nations, possessing a developed religion and great treasures in literature and art, before the Jews had emerged from the ignorance of barbarism.

Equally futile is the attempt of many Christian scholars to explain the remarkable coincidences between the legends of Krishna and of Christ upon the supposition that the story of Krishna as a hero in the Puranas, and as a divine teacher in the Bhagavad-Gita, are a modification of the story of Christ resulting from intercourse between India and Asia

Minor during the early centuries of the Christian era.

The Mahabharata and the Puranas are compilations from works written by different authors at different periods ; but those works themselves were largely composed of extremely ancient legends, and unprejudiced scholars consider the latest revision of the compilations to have taken place some time during the last two or three centuries before the Christian era, the development of the legends concerning Krishna being due to the efforts of the Brahmans to counteract the rapidly-increasing influence of Buddhist philosophy.

THE JEWISH SCRIPTURES.

THE Hebrews were never an important or powerful nation. Originally a collection of small Phœnician tribes, they became consolidated into a petty kingdom in the time of Samuel.

Although the Jewish Scriptures contain elaborate accounts of the glory of the nation, especially during the successive reigns of David and Solomon, these statements are not corroborated by any other evidence. On the contrary, the Jews as a people were so insignificant that their very existence was unknown to, or ignored by, the great nations of antiquity. Homer does not mention the Jews, although the Homeric writings were nearly contemporary with the reign of Solomon, and Herodotus is equally silent, although his works show great familiarity with Assyrian and Egyptian history.

As the Jewish territory was very small, and Jerusalem, even if densely peopled, was not large enough to contain more than from twenty-five to thirty thousand inhabitants, it is plain that the Scripture statements as to the population of the country and the size of its armies are gross exaggerations.

The language and legends of the Hebrews show an admixture of Phœnician, Syrian, Chaldean, Assyrian, and Greek influence.

The Hebrews, like other ancient nations, applied sexual ideas to their deities and worshiped the sun; although among them, as among other peoples, there were enlightened souls, capable of accepting a monotheistic religion.

The worship of Jah, or Jehovah, was not introduced among the Jews until after the return of David from his long sojourn in Phœnicia. The word is similar to the sacred name in use among the Syrians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Greeks, and is traceable, as is everything else that concerns religion, to India.

The cult of Jehovah (or, more properly, Jahveh) was, in its earlier stages, a cruel and bloody worship, demanding frequent sacrifices of both men and

beasts. Victory was invoked before a battle, and celebrated after a successful campaign, by the immolation of human victims. Even the High Priest sacrificed himself whenever a national emergency appeared to require an offering of especial value.

There is every reason to suppose that Aaron was sacrificed on Mount Hor, in order to ensure success to the Israelites in their invasion of Palestine, the act being performed by his son, who came down from the mountain wearing his father's official dress. Moses suffered the same fate on Mount Pisgah, when he was gathered to his people as Aaron his brother was gathered, his eye not being dim nor his natural force abated.

The words "God" and "Lord," in the Christian versions of the Jewish Scriptures, are not correctly translated from the original.

The narrative portion of Genesis bears

evidence of two distinct sources of authorship. One form of the story uses *Elohim* and the other *Jehovah* for its *Deus ex machina*.

The Elohist story was probably written in Babylon when *El* was the chief deity, the Jehovistic in Judea, during the prevalence of the worship of *Jehovah*. Both narratives appear to be of later origin than the historical and prophetic parts of the Old Testament.

The story of the Creation, of the Fall, of Noah and the flood, probably had their source in India, and followed the course of emigration from that parent land. The Hebrew version of the Creation resembles most closely the Persian myth upon the same subject. The account of the Fall is, throughout, unquestionably phallic. The serpent, the tree, the fruit, as associated with the man and woman, are a figurative declaration of sexual union; the names *Adam*

and *Eve* suggest the same idea, and the story means that, so long as the representatives of the two sexes remained separate, each was happy and blest, while their coming together was the beginning of pain and sorrow to one and of toil and care to the other.

There is no evidence of there ever having been a universal flood; but some one local flood in the East was so extensive as to have been handed down in tradition until it took the form of a chronicle, varying in each nation according to the modes of thought of its inhabitants.

The Hebrew story appears to be a garbled version of the Assyrian legend, wherein Sisithrua and his ship are saved from the deluge by the god *Nuah*. *Nuah* was the Assyrian name for *Ea*, the All-pervading Intelligence, and, according to the rabbis, corresponds to the Chaldeo-Assyrian god *Nisroch*.

In the Bible story, Nuah appears as the rescued patriarch.

Abraham is most probably a mythical character. In the mind of the compiler of Genesis, it was as necessary to furnish a "federal head" for the Hebrew nation as for the human race, and the names Abraham and Sarah are only another form for the same idea as that contained in Adam and Eve; that is, the idea of generation. This play upon words is resorted to again in the story of Jacob, the father of the children of Israel.

Although Abraham speaks of God as Jehovah, yet God tells Moses that he was not known by that name to Abraham.

The covenant of circumcision is said to have been made by God with Abraham, and yet there is no legislation

concerning that rite in Exodus, Numbers, and Leviticus; and Moses did not enforce it in his own family, nor among the Israelites in the Wilderness.

The readiness of Abraham to offer up Isaac, of which so much is made by Christian teachers, signifies nothing more than that Abraham was an adherent of a cult which demanded human sacrifice to appease a cruel deity. Similar legends are related of King Harischandra in the Aitareya-Brahmana and of King Ambarîsha in the Ramayana. The Hebrew and Indian traditions have the same import, and imply the prevalence of the same bloody rites.

In the story of Abraham, as in many other legends of the Bible, it is possible that the character and career of some individual was the basis of religious allegory, and still more probable that, as in the creation of romances throughout

all historic time, the traits and experiences of many individuals were mingled to form new characters and circumstances in illustration of the ideas to be conveyed, or the principles to be enforced.

There is no proof that the Hebrews were ever enslaved in Egypt. The Egyptian monuments, so far as they have been deciphered, contain no mention of such a people; nor are there any traces of Egyptian influence in the language, customs, or religion of the early Hebrews.

The story of the birth of Moses and his rescue from an ark, or floating cradle, has its parallel in the myth of Romulus and in the sculptured story of Sargina, an Assyrian king.

Neither Saul, nor David, nor Solomon appears to have known anything of Moses, or of the code of laws supposed

to have been written by him. Those laws were only a reflection of the laws and customs of older and more important nations, modified to suit the character and circumstances of the Jews.

The Pentateuch is evidently a compilation by various persons. It was made up in part out of old poetry. For example, the passage of the Red Sea was literalized from the poem called "The Song of Moses," and the miracle of the sun and moon standing still originated in a rapturous ejaculation found in the book of Jasher.

It is not probable that any portion of the Jewish Scriptures was in existence earlier than the seventh century before the Christian era, and the books usually considered the oldest are of much more recent origin than that period.

The division of time into weeks did

not obtain in Western Asia and in Europe until about 700 B.C.; consequently, all the Scripture stories founded upon, or having allusion to, a period of seven days must have been written after that date.

The comparatively modern origin of the latter part of the patriarchial narrative is proved by the anachronisms contained in it, as well as by the Greek influence observable in its language and incidents. The use of iron, which is mentioned very early in the record, was not introduced into Judea until about the time of David.

The Jews had no written law in the time of David, and as a people they knew nothing of any sacred books until after the Babylonian captivity.

The resemblance to each other in language and style of the books of the

Old Testament is so striking as to demonstrate that they must all have been written within a comparatively short period of time.

The sacred Name revealed to Moses in the bush was not known to the Jews until after the return of David from his sojourn among the Phœnicians.

Genesis was written after the custom of circumcision had been adopted by the Jews.

The law in Exodus, Numbers, and Leviticus was written before the Jews had learned the rite of circumcision, or after it had become so general that no legislation respecting its enforcement was necessary.

Deuteronomy was written after the practice of circumcision had become general. The internal evidence of this book

points to the prophet Jeremiah as its author. It is probably that "Book of the Law" which was found in the Temple during the reign of Josiah.

The Pentateuch, Joshua, Joel, Obadiah, Amos, and Micah were probably written after the sack of Jerusalem by the allied forces, and while the great bulk of the nation was in foreign captivity.

Leviticus is of very late date. The institution of the Levites arose after the Babylonian captivity, at a time when the martial spirit of the Jews had been quelled by repeated misfortunes and their devotional zeal increased, in a corresponding ratio and by the same means.

The fact that several of the prophets, as Samuel, David, Abijah, Elijah, Elisha and others, fulfilled to a great extent the functions of priests is a proof that there was not in their days a family set apart for that office.

Judges, Ruth, and Samuel contain no mention of Moses. They were probably written earlier than the Pentateuch, and before the story of Moses was conceived.

The book of Chronicles was written after all the other books of the Old Testament; probably between two and three hundred years before the Christian era. Like the book of Joshua, it is of no historical value.

The book of Job was written later than B.C. 500. Noah, Daniel, and Job were characters unknown to the Jews until after they had come in contact with the Greeks and babylonians.

The description of the building of the tabernacles in the Wilderness implies the possession of materials impossible to have been obtained in such a place, as well as a knowledge of the useful and ornamental arts entirely beyond the capacity of

a race of newly-enfranchised brickmakers, whose previous hereditary employments had been pastoral.

The Ark, as a piece of sacred furniture, was used by Chaldeans, Assyrians, Hindus, Phœnicians and Greeks. The original idea of the ark was phallic.

The number seven, as a sacred number, was not applied until after the Jews had mingled with the Babylonians and Persians.

The language of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah respecting the Sabbath would seem to imply that the observance was of recent institution in their day, and that the people needed to be reminded of its obligations.

The word does not occur in the Psalms, nor in Proverbs; and neither David nor Solomon observed the seventh day as a hallowed time. There is no evidence

that the Sabbath was ever kept by the whole people until after the Babylonian Captivity, and the excessive sanctity ascribed to the day in the time of Jesus was an idea of gradual development.

The Jewish Sabbath was probably a modification of an Assyrian feast.

In the cuneiform inscriptions *Sabatu* is defined as a "day of rest for the heart." A recently-deciphered inscription records that "the seventh day is the festival of Merodach and Zirpaniter, a holy day." No flesh nor fruit must be eaten, no work done—not even sacrifice performed. Not even clothes changed on that day. The fourteenth day was consecrated to Beltis and Nergal, the twenty-first to the sun and moon, the twenty-eighth to Hea and Nergal as a "rest-day." The nineteenth (which would be Friday, Venus' day) was the White Day of the goddess Gula.

The seventh day, being dedicated to Saturn, the "Most High" among the planets as to situation, would naturally take precedence as a feast-day.

In like manner Sunday, the day dedicated to the sun, the star which excels all others in its influence upon the earth, was set apart by Constantine, himself a worshiper of the sun for forty years, in honor of the deified Christ "the Sun of Righteousness."

The Passover was probably instituted after the return of the Jews from captivity in Babylon, and was a modification of an ancient pagan feast. There are traces of the Passover in India. It is not mentioned in the Psalms, nor in Maccabees. It marked the vernal equinox, and thereby implied a knowledge of the zodiac.

The Feast of Pentecost appears to

have commemorated the end of the harvest.

The Feast of Trumpets marked the beginning of the New Year. It was a Hebrew version of a pagan feast, connected with the worship of the sun; and the use of trumpets proves it to have been of late introduction among the Jews, as trumpets were invented by the Etruscans about B.C. 800, and did not become common until about B.C. 500.

The Feast of Tabernacles was connected with the autumnal equinox, and was originally phallic in its signification.

The Day of Atonement was instituted after the Babylonian Captivity, at a time when the ideas of confession, pardon, and atonement, which were not recognized by the early law, had become prevalent through the influence of the Talmudic writings.

The book of Psalms is a compilation of Hebrew poems by various authors. Some of these compositions are very ancient; others were written at a late period in Jewish history. They show for the most part a very low conception of Deity and a very narrow and vindictive spirit toward men. Only a few of them can, with probability, be ascribed to David. The recent decipherment of cuneiform texts has clearly shown that many of them are of Babylonian origin.

The Proverbs and other writings attributed to Solomon are a collection of the wit and wisdom of his day, to which he not unlikely contributed a share.

The Prophets of the Old Testament must be regarded in the same light with the seers and sages of all nations in all ages. Some of them were keen observers, foretelling wisely the result of good or bad management in political

affairs; others were religious enthusiasts, gifted with an eloquent tongue or a fiery pen; others, again, were fanatics, uncultivated in mind and apparently dissolute in morals. All of them were animated with the bloodthirsty and revengeful spirit of their race, and limited to the narrow and exclusive policy of their nation.

There is no evidence of superhuman wisdom in the Hebrew prophecies when we consider them in relation to the circumstances under which they were composed, and refrain from forcing a double interpretation of their poetical expressions.

Isaiah is the work of at least two authors. The prophecies contained in the second chapter never have been and never can be fulfilled. Like so many other fervid outpourings of that poet, they are only the expression of his patriotic long-

ing to see his country free and prosperous and righteous.

In the fourteenth verse of the seventh chapter, the prophet, wishing to prevent the formation of a treaty between Judea and Assyria against Syria and Israel, assures Ahaz that within the time necessary to elapse between conception and birth—that is, within nine months—his kingdom shall be delivered from his enemies. The ninth chapter points in all probability to the child Hezekiah—at any rate, to a coming saviour, who should break the oppressive yoke of the Assyrian power.

In the passages which are considered especially Messianic, and which were written by the second Isaiah, the Jewish Church is personified as Israel, and its deliverance from Babylon foretold.

The seventy-second Psalm predicts the reign of a future glorious King of Judah, but has no application to the career of Jesus.

Ezekiel and Micah speak of the Messiah as coming from Bethlehem, and as being David himself, or a spiritual David, and Isaiah calls him a rod out of the stem of Jesse; whereas Jesus was a Nazarene, and was not descended from David, unless Joseph was his father; nor even then can the incorrect and contradictory genealogies of Matthew and Luke be accepted as an authentic record of his paternal ancestors.

The thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel will not admit of any other than a local and literal interpretation.

The whole book of Daniel is probably spurious. The ninth chapter, so important to Christian dogma, is falsely translated in the English version, conveys a different signification in the Greek, and is totally rejected by German critics.

In the seventh chapter of Daniel the coming of the Son of Man follows the breaking up of the Syrian monarchy.

Zechariah, in his mention of the Branch, refers only to Joshua, the son of Josedech, as is plainly to be seen from the subsequent narrative.

The ninth verse of the ninth chapter of Zechariah is a political prophecy relating to contemporaneous events, and has no resemblance to the life of Jesus, excepting in the riding on an ass, which, in the prophetic words, implied the following of peace rather than of war.

The Messiah of Micah was a future deliverer of Israel from the Assyrians.

The passage in Job which is to Christians one of the strongest proofs of the divinity of Christ and of the immortality of the soul—

“I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see

God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another ;”

is a false translation, from beginning to end.

In the correct versions of the original Hebrew, the word God does not occur; and what Job really said, and all that he really meant, was that, although while living he had been misunderstood and calumniated, yet he felt sure that the time would come, perhaps long after he should have turned to dust, when some one would rise to vindicate his character and redeem his name—a natural feeling and a natural utterance, which has often been experienced and expressed both before and since Job's day.

The canon of Jewish Scripture was determined by a synagogue of the Pharisees of the Second Temple after Judea had become subject to the Macedonian empire.

Many of the books rejected at that time have since been utterly destroyed, in consequence of the persecution of the Jews by the Christians.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THERE is no distinct trace of any of the Gospels earlier than one hundred and fifty years after the death of Christ, and in all that time only once a tradition that any of the Evangelists had ever composed a Gospel at all.

This one instance is that of Matthew, who, according to Papias, wrote a book called "Oracles of our Lord."

There is good proof that the first and Second Gospels were not written by Matthew and Mark.

The Third Gospel is an avowed compilation by a person who was not an eye-witness of the events he describes, and whose identity cannot be established.

The author of the Fourth Gospel is unknown, and his work differs widely from the other three records.

Not one of these Gospels claims to have been divinely inspired.

The genealogy of Matthew contradicts that of Luke; neither of them is historical, and both of them are of Joseph's family, not Mary's.

According to Matthew, the Angel of the Annunciation appeared to Joseph after Mary's pregnancy had begun; according to Luke, he appeared to Mary before she had conceived. In Luke, the angel is called Gabriel. This developed form of the doctrine of angels was first observable among the Jews during the Captivity, and was the result of the influence of the Zend religion of the Persians upon the Jewish mind.

The miraculous conception is not men-

tioned by Mark and John, and many of the early Christians rejected the theory from the beginning.

All ancient peoples had their stories of supernatural births as a means of accounting for marked individual superiority. Plato, Pythagoras, Alexander the Great, the elder Scipio, and Augustus were each begotten by a god; and Buddha and Krishna were not only of divine origin, but the mother of each was endowed before birth with superhuman purity.

The story of Jesus, from beginning to end, bears a remarkable resemblance to that of Krishna, the eighth incarnation of Vishnu and the favorite deity of India—originally, in all probability, a personification of the sun.

There are many very ancient legends concerning the parentage of Jesus, and all of them concur in asserting that he

was the son of Mary before her marriage, and that his father's name was Panthera.

There is no reason to suppose that Mary had not other children.

There is no historical proof that Jesus was born in Bethlehem; on the contrary, the evidence is all against such a theory.

There was no census ordered by Augustus at the time asserted, and the Roman law did not require the imperial subjects to go to their native cities to be taxed.

The census was taken at the residences and at the principal cities of each district. Moreover, women were not registered; therefore, Mary's presence would not have been necessary, even if Joseph had been obliged to go, and nothing but necessity would have been likely to cause her to undertake such a journey when far advanced in pregnancy.

The evident object of the Evangelist is to have the child born in Bethlehem, because Micah had prophesied that the Messiah should be born there.

The story of the delivery having occurred in a stable or a cave, and of the child having been born in a manger, is probably only on the supposition that the taxing really took place, and that the village was crowded with strangers.

The story of the Shepherds is apparently a reminiscence of the infancy of Krishna.

The stories of the visit of the Magi, the flight into Egypt, and the Presentation in the Temple contradict each other.

The presentation is said to have taken place within the legal time, forty days after the birth. If so, the parents must have returned to Bethlehem to meet the Magi there. But Luke says they went

directly to Nazareth from Jerusalem. If the flight into Egypt preceded the presentation, it would not have been possible for them to go and return within the forty days; nor would they have ventured into Jerusalem, where Herod was. This theory would require the birth, the visit of the Magi, the massacre of the infants of Bethlehem, the death of Herod, and the journey to and from Egypt, all within forty days.

The birth of Jesus is connected with the visit of the Magi by a participial construction implying that the two events happened consecutively. The same construction is used with regard to the command to flee into Egypt and the return of the Magi from Jerusalem.

The introduction of the Magi points to a Persian legend as one of the sources of the Jewish story. The Persian Mithra was born of a virgin, in a cave, on the twenty-fifth of December. A representa-

tion of the event has been discovered in the Roman catacombs. The mother holds in her lap the infant Mithra, whose head is encircled by a halo, and before them three men in Persian dress are kneeling and offering gifts.

The early Christians worshiped by night in the catacombs, not from necessity, but because their rites were borrowed from those of Mithra, in which a cave was an essential feature.

The story of the massacre of the children of Bethlehem by Herod is borrowed from a Hindu legend.

The Rajah of Mathura, uncle of Krishna, is said to have slaughtered all the children born in his dominions during the night of Krishna's birth, he having been forewarned by a prophet that the child would eventually dethrone him and succeed to his possessions.

It is possible that a despotic prince

may have issued such a command; indeed, the event was recorded in sculpture upon a temple which still exists.

But it is impossible that Herod should have ventured to massacre the Emperor's subjects without an imperial order to that effect; and, if such a thing had been done, there would have been some mention of the deed in contemporaneous records.

The story of Jesus in the Temple is entirely fanciful. The pupils never sat in the presence of the Doctors of the Temple. The Jews had an idea that genius developed as early as the twelfth year—that is, on the outgrowing of childhood.

The supposition that the parents of Jesus were conscious of his identity as the Messiah is overthrown by the frequent statement that they *wondered* at his conduct and sayings and were unable to understand him.

The story of the Temptation is an allegory, which has its parallel in the mythologies of other nations.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke confine the ministry of Jesus to Galilee until his first journey to Jerusalem.

John, on the other hand, selects Judea as the principal theater of his labors, and makes his visits to Galilee occasional and short.

There is no historical foundation for the story of John the Baptist.

It was a favorite notion among the Jews that a child born of aged parents previously childless was sure to be gifted with extraordinary powers, and destined to a remarkable career.

Although John is declared to have been the conscious forerunner of the Messiah, he did not know Jesus until the time of the Baptism; and even dur-

ing his last days in prison he was in doubt as to the authenticity of the Saviour's mission.

Nothing is known of Jesus from his twelfth year to the time of his baptism. The inference from what is stated is that he remained in Nazareth until he was grown up. The Talmud asserts that he was taught by a member of the Sanhedrim, and that he afterward went to study in Egypt, from whence he brought back a knowledge of magic.

Many scholars have doubted whether such a man as Jesus ever existed, and the doubt becomes stronger with the increase of knowledge respecting the history and literature and religious developments of ancient times.

The marked resemblance between his story and that of Krishna, and the fact that he is not mentioned by any writer of his time (the brief sentence in Jo-

sephus being universally acknowledged an interpolation), are powerful arguments in support of such a theory.

But, as in the case of Krishna, there may have been some heroic man to whom the sun-myths were applied by his contemporaries; so there seems to be a considerable amount of evidence in favor of the actual personality, at the time alleged, of an obscure Jew, who, through his fearless denunciation of the crying sins of his age, provoked early martyrdom for himself, and thereby strengthened the deep impression which his life and teachings had made upon his countrymen.

It is most probable that the author of the Fourth Gospel was a Gentile, a Gnostic of Alexandria or of Ephesus.

The Gospel and Epistles of John cannot have been written by the author of the Apocalypse.

The external evidence in favor of the Apostle John as the author of the Apocalypse is stronger than can be collected for the authorship of any other book of the New Testament, excepting certain of the Epistles of Paul.

In the first chapter of the Gospel of John, Christianity is viewed through the medium of the Alexandrian philosophy. The recognition of Jesus as the *Logos* was the idea of a later time than the days of the Apostles, and entirely beyond the comprehension of the John who followed Jesus.

At the time when Gnosticism was beginning to influence Christianity, John would have been a very old man, whereas the style of the Gospel bearing his name possesses the fervor and freshness belonging to early prime. Moreover, the work is written in pure and elegant Greek, and is entirely free from Hebraistic idioms.

The narrative is exceedingly artistic; the events are made to harmonize with the theological views of the author, and there is scarcely a trace of the homely moral teaching, by parable and proverb, which characterizes the more simple story of the other three Gospels.

The author is evidently not a Jew nor a native of Palestine; and his mistakes respecting names, localities, and customs prove that he was not familiar with the country of the Jews, and could not have been an eye-witness of the wonders he relates.

He always speaks of the Jews as an alien people. He mentions "the Feasts of the Jews," "the Passover of the Jews," and says "your law," "their law," in reference to the Mosaic code. He calls the Jews "children of the devil," instead of "the chosen people;" and, while declaring Jesus to be the Son

of God, makes no allusion to his descent from David, or to the Jewish expectation of a Messiah.

The Fourth Gospel does not closely resemble the other records in its incidents. Some circumstances are omitted, and others altered, to suit the prevailing idea of the composition.

The author mentions few miracles; but the most remarkable ones of all, the raising of Lazarus and the giving sight to a man born blind, are related only by him.

The Paraclete is spoken of for the first time in the Gospel of John.

The character of John, as portrayed in the Gospel bearing his name, is altogether different from the descriptions given of him in the other Gospels. In the former work he is shown to be of an eminently tender and gentle dispo-

sition; in the later narratives he is always mentioned with his brother, and the only occasions on which they become conspicuous are when they draw upon themselves the rebuke of Jesus for their selfish ambition and cruel intolerance. In these records John is called "a son of thunder," instead of "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and Peter was in all things the leading spirit of the band. There is no record or tradition of early times supporting the idea of the pre-eminence of John in the favor of his Lord, as asserted in the Fourth Gospel.

The author places the Crucifixion on the fourteenth Nisan, the day of the Jewish Passover, to fulfil the idea of Jesus as the Paschal Lamb, and makes the Last Supper an ordinary meal occurring on the thirteenth Nisan, the day before the Passover. But the synoptic Gospels agree in calling the supper

which Jesus ate with his disciples the Feast of the Passover, and in placing the Crucifixion on the next day, the fifteenth Nisan.

It is recorded, by many authors, that the Apostle John always kept the fourteenth Nisan as the day on which Jesus instituted the Christian Feast.

THE WORK OF JESUS.

THE moral precepts of Jesus are the same that have been taught by the great moralists of all countries and all ages; the same that every sincere mind is able to learn, from the experience of life, without a teacher.

A reformer is always, to some extent, an unpractical man. He is therefore able to conceive of a standard of purity and generosity beyond the attainment of most mortals, although in harmony with their highest aspirations.

This is the secret of a reformer's power, that he does not teach a new idea, but only arouses a sentiment which is common to the whole race, although dormant or stifled in the majority.

In estimating the work of Jesus, his alleged miracles must be left out of the account.

Miracles have never occurred, excepting among ignorant and superstitious people.

It is possible that Jesus possessed remarkable magnetic power as a healer of diseases, and very probable that he had acquired medical knowledge and skill in preparing for his mission; but the stories of his cures are so fabulous that they have no historical value under any interpretation.

According to the Gospels, Jesus believed and taught that the end of the world would come before the generation

which heard him should pass away, and that he should then reappear upon the earth as the Judge of quick and dead. But there is some reason to believe that all such expressions belong to a prophecy later than his time.

It is probable that many of the exhortations to the followers of Jesus to remain faithful under persecution, and to reject false Christs, were written by Christians of the second century, to strengthen their brethren against the pretensions of a certain Jew called *Bar Cochba* (the son of the star), who called himself and was believed by many of the Jews to be the Messiah, and who during the reign of Hadrian (A.D. 131-135) attempted to deliver his nation from the Roman yoke. His theory seems the more reasonable- from the fact that "the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place" can only refer to a temple of Jupiter containing

an image of that deity which was erected by Hadrian upon the site of the Jewish Temple.

So far as the reputation of Jesus as an Omniscient Being, or even as an accurate scholar, is concerned, it would be better to accept a like explanation of the historical allusion in Matthew xxiii, 35.

Zacharias, son of Berachias, was the prophet Zechariah; but there is no evidence that he suffered martyrdom, and, if he did, he was not the last of the martyrs. It does not help the matter to say, as many commentators have said, that Jesus confounded Zechariah, son of Jehoida, with the prophet, and supposed him to be the last prophet, because Chronicles was the last book in the Hebrew Scriptures.

But there was a Zacharias, son of Baruchus, who, as Josephus relates, was martyred within the courts of the Tem-

ple, during the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, about forty years after the crucifixion.

Another curious instance of incorrect quotation attributed to Jesus is when he justifies his claim to be the Son of God by repeating a part of the sixth verse of the eighty-second Psalm: "*I said ye are gods*," which has reference to the judges of the people, and cannot, even by the utmost ingenuity of theological interpretation, be applied as an argument in favor of the Messiahship of Jesus.

Whether it be true or not that as Jesus progressed in his career he became visionary and fanatical, as the words and deeds ascribed to him would seem to prove, it is certain that the value of his work consists in the pure morality which he enforced by his precepts and illustrated by his example.

It is no lessening of his fame to say that Krishna and Buddha and Zarathustra and Confucius, and other moral reformers have rendered a like service to mankind, each in his own time and way; or to admit that many of the opinions of Jesus, being the outgrowth of his age and nationality, cannot influence the wider development and more complicated social philosophy of modern civilization.

CHRISTIANITY.

JESUS left no writings. He did not formulate any creed, nor develop any plan for the regulation of either church or state.

The religion professedly built upon his teachings was a mixture of Pauline Christianity, Grecian philosophy, and Buddhistic spiritualism, tinctured with many superstitions of the old Jewish faith.

The domestic dogmas, so to speak, of theology were of gradual development. Paul ignores completely the circumstances of Christ's earthly life, considering him in his divine character only, and accepting the resurrection as a fact because it favors his own theory of redemption.

It was not until the fifth century after Christ that Mary began to be called the "Mother of God," and the innovation was opposed by many Christians, until a council of bishops confirmed the new dogma.

During the sixth century, the doctrine of her bodily ascension into heaven became a definite article of faith. Gregory of Tours gives a detailed account of her assumption, and describes the manner in which the Lord went to meet her with a retinue of angels, and ordered her holy body to be conveyed on a cloud to Paradise;

“Adstitit Dominus susceptumque corpus sanctum in nube deferri jussit in Paradisum.”

The Virgin and Child was an object of reverence in every religion. The original idea is generation, and the group symbolizes the reproductive powers of Nature. There are representations of Krishna, nursed by his mother Devaki, and of Horus upon the lap of Isis, which, with a little alteration in the matter of costume, would answer equally well for the Jewish Mary and her son Jesus.

The Sophia of the Gnostics was a Greek form of the same idea, and to the initiated the name implied a great deal more than the personification of wisdom.

Many other superstitions, with their appropriate symbols and ceremonies, were naturally and easily incorporated into the new cult from more ancient systems.

Antioch, where the first Gentile Christian church was established, was a central ground for the scholars of Europe and Asia; and Rome, Ephesus and Alexandria were visited by travelers from all parts of the known world, including India. The Jewish Christians remained faithful to many of their old Hebrew traditions and customs, while the Gentile converts were naturally disposed to introduce their earlier beliefs into the new faith.

Baptism is a natural and universal symbol of cleansing from sin, and has been the initiatory rite in almost all religions. Water was considered by the ancients as the generative force which produces the fertility of the earth, and was therefore adopted as the symbol of regeneration.

The Lord's Supper, or Eucharist, is a symbol, and in so far a survival, of

human sacrifices. There is good reason to believe that the Jews in very early times, and until the building of the first Temple, not only sacrificed their first-born at the Passover, but ate the sacrifice.

From the beginning of the Temple-service until the Captivity, a lamb was substituted for the first-born, although in the Temple a human victim was sacrificed, whose blood was mixed with the Paschal bread.

The service of the second Temple required only a lamb for the Passover, and the bread was made without blood, although human blood was still considered the most complete expiation for sin.

The injunctions contained in the Avesta, "*Eat ye this meat (myazda), ye who through piety and purity are worthy of it;*" "*I am the pure Saoma who averts death; entreat me, eat me, praise me with hymns,*" correspond very closely to what

Jesus says of himself as the bread of life, and his remarks to his disciples at the Last Supper. From the ancient Saoma worship are derived the Darun and Afringan ceremonies of the Parsis, which bear a striking resemblance to the Christian communion. The Darun (Dron) ceremony consists in the distribution and eating of small, round cakes of unleavened bread; the Afringan ceremony, which follows the Darun, consists in the distribution of consecrated wine and fruits. These ceremonies are probably modifications of the very sacred *hom*-rite. called *Yazishu* (*i.e.*, Yasna worship), itself a remnant of the Vedic Soma-sacrifice.

The cross was an important image in all ancient religions. Originally a phallic symbol, its tragical associations began with the sacrificial crucifixion of human beings to the sun-god. Among the Jews, only such victims were crucified alive; although the dead bodies of exe-

cuted criminals were sometimes exposed upon the cross to public view.

When Moses stood with outstretched arms above the contending armies of Israel and Amalek, he assumed the attitude of a crucified sacrifice to the sun, and through this allegorical offering of himself obtained victory for his people.

It would be well for Christians to lay more stress upon the moral teachings mingled with the Gospel story of Christ, and less upon the supposed benefits accruing from his death; because it is doubtful whether the crucifixion ever took place, and, even if it were a fact, Christ's death upon the cross was not nearly so painful as that of many a martyr since his time. And as for the mental agony of an incarnate God, who, seeing the end from the beginning, voluntarily submitted to temporary defeat at the hands of beings whom he had

created and should finally judge, being consoled the while by the joys of heavenly sovereignty, both in retrospection and in anticipation, surely the sufferings of such a one are not to be compared with those of a mere man whose physical tortures are made doubly cruel by doubts as to the worth of the cause for which he has lost everything, and by utter ignorance of any future beyond this life.

The Christian monogram IHS is derived from the three Greek letters representing the number 608, and answering to the Coptic numerals expressing the same quantity, which in both cases constituted an enigmatical name for the sun, or Bacchus.

The adoption of the fish as a symbol of Christ shows that Christianity in its earliest stages was imbued with pagan ideas. The fish, being a remarkably

prolific animal, was deified by ancient worshipers of the generative force, and hence became associated with Isis, Venus, and other goddesses of maternity. Friday being sacred to Venus and other queens of sexual love, fish was the appointed food for that day.

The word Trinity is not in the New Testament, nor can the idea be distinctly traced in either the Epistles or the Gospels. The Christian Trinity is only an idealization of a physiological fact, the modern rendering of an ancient myth.

The divinity of Christ cannot be proved from the first three Gospels. The Fourth Gospel was written by a zealous upholder of the doctrine which, however, did not obtain recognition until fifty years after the crucifixion.

Arius taught that Jesus was a creature of different substance from the

Father, and having an origin of existence in time.

The semi-Arians believed that Jesus had a beginning of existence, but denied that he was of different substance from the Father.

The creed called Athanasian (though Athanasius never saw it, it having been written long after he was dead) condemned the Arian heresy, but ignored altogether the theory of the semi-Arians.

The system of worship of the Romish Church is almost an exact reproduction of that which existed for centuries before the Christian era, and still exists in the Buddhist temples of Tartary and Thibet.

The Grand Lama (to whom the Pope corresponds) is elected by priests of a certain order. The creed professes belief in God, in the Trinity, in Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory. The service in-

cludes the offering of bread and wine, the practice of extreme unction, the blessing of marriage, the honoring of relics, prayer for the sick, sacrifices for the dead, processions, flagellations, fastings, giving of alms, confession, the use of crosses, rosaries, and holy water. Bishops are consecrated for the higher offices, and missionaries are sent out to make proselytes.

Celibacy, monasticism, asceticism, the telling of beads, and many other superstitious practices are of Hindu origin, and were common in Egypt and Greece before their adoption into Christianity.

The idea of the Immaculate Conception is of Indian origin. When a deity was to be incarnated, he was conceived by the celestial virgin in the body of a woman, and the woman chosen to this mysterious honor must herself have been born of a pure virgin, in order that the

celestial mother should not be defiled by human contact.

It is sometimes asserted that the striking resemblance between the ceremonies of the Buddhist and Romish churches is due to the early promulgation of Christianity in India by the apostles and their immediate successors. But Buddhism was a developed religion hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, and the elaborate worship of the Roman Catholic Church was not known to the early believers who entered India. Nestorius and his followers fled to Asia to escape persecution after their refusal to acknowledge Mary as the Mother of God, and the descendants of these fugitives still remain in Malabar, where they are known as Nazarenes. It has been thought that the apostle Thomas traveled as far as India, because there is a tomb there dedicated to St. Thomas and a sect called Christians of St. Thomas;

but it is more probable that the person alluded to was a Nestorian missionary. The rites of this sect are very simple. Their priests marry, and there are no monasteries among them. They have the cross, but no pictures nor images. Even if Thomas the Apostle had traveled in India, he could not have introduced the customs of the Romish Church, for they did not exist in his time; nor could the Nestorians have introduced them, for that sect was cut off from the Church early in the fifth century, whereas the first monastery in Christendom was established by St. Benedict in the sixth century, and rosaries were of still later adoption.

There is no command in the New Testament for the observance of Sunday. The early Christians met on the first day of the week; but the custom was not enforced upon the Church as a religious duty. Constantine, who for the

greater part of his life was a worshiper of Apollo, established Sunday as a Christian festival. It was really in honor of this solar deity that, A.D. 321, Constantine published a decree prohibiting manual labor, and the transaction of public business "on the venerable day of the sun"—*venerabili die solis*—a divinity that was always held in great reverence by him, and seems to have embodied his highest conception of the Supreme Being. Indeed, it is a curious and significant fact that at the very time when this first Christian emperor was engaged in convoking councils, deciding dogmatic controversies, and regulating ecclesiastical affairs, the image of the sun-god still retained its place on the reverse of the imperial coins, and was only gradually, and, as it were, clandestinely superseded by the monogram of Christ and other distinctively Christian types and symbols, about the middle of the fourth century, or thirteen years after Constantine's death,

The twenty-fifth of December was the birthday of the Persian sun-god Mithra, and was also celebrated by the Romans as *dies natalis solis invicti*, the natal day of the unconquered sun. The same day was in fact a festival of many ancient nations on the return of the sun from the winter solstice, and was adopted by Christians as the birthday of the "sun of righteousness," the date of nativity of Jesus being unknown. By the earliest Fathers Christ was called *Anatoli*, the Sunrise; and this idea, embodied in church architecture, fixed the place of the chancel toward the east. Ritualistic orientation is a survival of sun-worship.

In the fifth century, Pope Leo I found it necessary to censure the Christians of Rome, because they were in the habit of turning their faces to the east, and doing reverence to the rising sun, before entering the church for morning service.

Easter was originally a festival of the Germans in honor of Ostarä, their goddess of nature, or the earth, and eggs were eaten as symbols of germinating life. The Christian Church adopted the feast and the emblem in commemoration of the resurrection to life of the crucified Saviour.

The story of the crucifixion, entombment, and resurrection of Christ corresponds to the sun-myth, and may be explained by the position of that luminary at the season when those marvelous events are supposed to have occurred.

The observance of All Souls' and All Saints' Day was borrowed from the annual ceremonies of the Romans in honor of their deceased ancestors.

The priests of ancient cults, when engaged in the worship of any deity representing sexual mysteries, were obliged to wear a dress resembling that of women.

As the worship of the Romish Church is directed more to the Virgin than to the male Trinity, there is an appropriateness in the official costume of the priests, which is more feminine than masculine, and strongly suggestive, both in form and in ornamentation, of phallic ideas.

In the benediction of the Romish Church the priest represents with his fingers the Trinity, or triad. It is an extremely ancient form, borrowed from the East, and originally symbolizing generation. The Jewish priest, in separating three fingers and then placing his hands together, represented the triad and the unit, "the four great gods from whom all creation has arisen."

The tonsure, like the pictured *nimbus*, is an emblem of the sun.

Not only the gorgeous cathedrals of

past times, but the elaborate churches and chapels erected in our own days, bristle all over, inside and outside, with relics of heathen idolatry in its lowest and most primitive form. The shape of the edifice, the carvings upon its seats and stalls, the sacred monograms and symbols of its altars, the dresses of its priests, even the pattern of its floors and upholstery, are significant, not of regeneration in its modern, spiritual sense, but of generation as the most obvious natural force.

The Roman Church boasts of its unbroken unity as the proof of its divine origin and the pledge of its indestructible power. This unity, however, is only agreement in external forms.

The denial of the right of private judgment in spiritual affairs is undoubtedly a pillar of strength to delay the ultimate downfall of this antiquated institution. But its grand secret of power

is the retention of the old idea of an altar and a sacrifice.

The Protestant doctrine of justification by faith was not only a declaration of independence of the tyranny of Rome—it was also the sentence of destruction to all ecclesiastical organizations which should be attempted outside of the Mother Church.

If the Romish Church be an anachronism, the Protestant Church is an absurdity.

A Protestant meeting-house, as a convenient place for the dissemination of useful knowledge and the inculcation of moral precepts, is an appropriate feature of civilization in its present stage of development; but a church without an altar (or with only an empty one), with sacraments which are no mysteries, with a pastor who does not pretend to any divine authority, and a congregation which

weighs and criticises every premise and conclusion of the pulpit, is a contradiction which every logical mind must recognize.

A purely spiritual faith needs no expression in outward worship; a sensuous faith demands the richest and most abundant symbolism. There is, in reality, no half-way accommodation for these two opposing forces: here, as everywhere, compromises are either useless or fatal.

Protestantism is an advance upon Catholicism, because the power of its clergy is limited, and the minds of its laity are, in some degree, left open to the influences of knowledge, thus increasing the probability of ultimate freedom.

Religion—that is, intellectual beliefs respecting a deity or deities and a future state of retribution for mankind—has not necessarily anything to do with morality—that is, the proper development of the

individual, and the just fulfilment of his duties toward his fellows.

Under every system of religion, it has been possible for men to believe firmly and act wickedly; and, in the long run, religion has hindered more than it has helped the progress of knowledge and the elevation of humanity.

Christians are willing to acknowledge the truth of this position so far as it refers to heathen nations; but they deny its application to their own creed and practice.

It is easy to say, and to make ignorant persons believe, that the superior progress of civilization in the Western hemisphere is due to the enlightening and purifying influences of Christianity; but a deeper study of the history of the race convinces the unprejudiced investigator that this progress is due to the extension of education, and that Christianity, under the form of the

Church, has always and everywhere opposed innovation and reform.

It was the study of the Latin moralists that prompted the first advance in spiritual doctrine during the Dark Ages.

It was the revival of Greek learning in the fifteenth century that prepared the way for the Reformation.

It is free learning, and not Christianity, which has improved the race. It is the printer, and not the priest, who has sown the truth broadcast among the people.

Christianity has always been the friend of superstition.

It was due quite as much to the authority of the Scriptures as to the ignorance of the people that a belief in witchcraft, sorcery, and magic was able to prevail so long throughout Christendom; and the strong front which faith still opposes to knowledge is the result of the vast amount of superstition that

underlies the principal dogmas of Christianity.

Protestants may laugh at the modern miracles of Catholicism; but so long as they themselves believe that the Virgin Mary was able to conceive Jesus by the Holy Ghost, they have no right to say that it is impossible for her to appear to her worshipers in France or Belgium in these days.

Physical science alone is the destroyer of superstition; and every religious system is bad that discourages the study of the works of Nature, or refuses to accept the results of scientific experiment.

The moral advantages of Christianity have been greatly exaggerated by its partisans. The new faith exerted a powerful influence in the Roman Empire, simply because it was superior to Roman paganism. For the same reason, Mohammedanism has prevailed over the

inferior religions with which it has come in contact. But for a long time Christianity has been behind the best instincts of the age; although, so soon as a reform has succeeded in overcoming the opposition of the Church, the latter arrogates to itself the credit of all the improvements resulting from the change.

The truth is, that Christianity, like other religions, is continually acted upon by all social, political, and moral influences. Under an aristocratic government it strengthens the rich against the poor; in a skeptical age it places obnoxious doctrines in the background, and turns blunt statements into poetical figures; it is never a leading force, but is always led, or, rather, dragged along in the wake of civilization, and is therefore the last to perceive and enjoy the benefits of progress.

The elevation of woman is not due to

Christianity; but, first, to the respect awarded to the sex by Germanic sentiment, and, more recently, to the respect which woman has been able to command for herself, through the beneficent exercise of her cultivated powers.

The early literature of India affords evidence that among the Hindus woman formerly obtained due recognition as the equal companion of man.

Christianity has not been the foe of slavery. The Church of England permitted the government to acquire slaves and opposed with all its influence the (at first) small body of agitators who protested against the crime; and the Church of England joined with the Church in America to hinder the abolition of slavery in the United States, and to favor the efforts of the slaveholders during the War of Emancipation.

There is not a single channel of mercy

or of benevolence that was not at first prepared by morality, independent of faith, and scarcely one that was not condemned, before being adopted, by the Church.

Dissection of the human body, in the interests of medical science, was recommended by the religious teachers of India, and practiced by Indian physicians ages before Vesalius risked persecution by the Christian Church for attempting the practical study of anatomy in Europe.

We all know how the Scientists have always fared at the hands of the Church.

Darwin is no less a martyr than was Galileo, so far as the reception of the ideas of each is concerned; and Newton, Faraday, and Agassiz are honored by the Christian world, not so much for discovering new principles, as for avoiding the logical deductions from the premises they announced.

Public institutions for the sick and crippled and idiotic and insane are a necessary outgrowth of large communities and of a settled social condition. If the hospitals established by the Crusaders at foreign and hostile ports really approached more nearly to the system of modern hospitals than did others existing at that time and previously, it was the exigency of the circumstances, and not the superior piety of the founders and managers that caused the difference. The amelioration in treatment and the improvements in accommodation now obtaining in all benevolent institutions are the result of increased knowledge, and were, for the most part, begun by philanthropic individuals, who acted from motives of humanity, and who encountered opposition, at every step, from dogmatic and official religion.

The rapidly spreading recognition of the brotherhood of man is not the re-

sult of the precepts or practices of the Church, although the teachings of Jesus, in common with those of all moralists, have influenced the race in this direction. The improvement is more immediately due to the universal interchange of ideas through facilities of travel, to the decline of despotisms and aristocracies through the results of mechanical invention, and, above all, to the general diffusion of knowledge by means of the printing-press and free schools.

It is an incontrovertible fact that, in every country where dogmatic theology has had supreme power, civilization has declined. India in the Eastern hemisphere, Spain and Italy in the Western, are sufficient examples of this truth; and other nations have been hindered in their development precisely in proportion to the degree of influence which priestcraft has been able to exert upon official government and public opinion.

An intellectual creed is necessarily narrowing to the intellect. In times of belief it stifles free thought, and forces minds naturally diverse in gifts to take a uniform shape and direction. Those periods in history which are most satisfactory to the churchman were, in reality, periods of great mental darkness and of a pitiable lack of independence and vigor of character.

In times of reaction from the tyranny of an inflexible creed, those who remain faithful are made unjust and cruel toward those who rebel; and, in consequence, many who have found freedom keep their thoughts to themselves, while others more bold are embittered through persecution, and allow their intellectual liberty to degenerate into the license of the scoffer, becoming haters of men's persons rather than of their ideas.

Inasmuch as every prevailing religion offers temporal advantages and emolu-

ments to its adherents, there will always be found a multitude to profess belief for the sake of their own worldly interests.

This melancholy truth was never more apparent than at the present day, when, knowledge being more extensive and thorough than at any former period, unbelief is more widespread and more intelligent than ever before.

Any man of keen intellect who binds himself to a system of religious faith is in danger of becoming a hypocrite, because his mind enlarges while his creed remains fixed, and his instinctive desire to free himself from bondage is checked, either by a selfish regard for his personal interest, or by an honest conviction that the limits which he finds too narrow for himself are safe boundaries for less enlightened understandings. But to evade truth is always disastrous. Such a man despises himself for his insincerity, and despises others for their credulity.

This is especially the case with priests, to whom the routine of worship is becoming an old story, and who, through their long and intimate acquaintance with the workings of men's hearts, have learned, beyond any possibility of unlearning, how very human are the means by which the masses are spiritually governed.

The Jesuits, as a religious order, have always been notorious, not only for their ingenious subtilization and perversion of the plain rules of morality, but also for their ability to combine the most devoted zeal for the interests of the Church with the most philosophical skepticism respecting her dogmas; and other religious societies have shown the same untruthfulness, in a degree commensurate with the learning and importance of their members.

The spirit which allowed the priests of St. Peter's in Luther's time to travesty

the mass, which prompted Cardinal de Rohan to call the Christian dogma "a poor copy of the pagan mythology," and Dillon, Bishop of Evreux, to boast that his only breviary was Voltaire's "Philosophical Dictionary," and Pope Leo X to say of the story of Christ, "*It has been a profitable story for us,*" is the same which leads one learned Christian of the present day to prescribe *accuracy* for the cure of doubts concerning the Trinity, and another to declare that, although Christianity is founded upon falsehood, it is best for the world to accept it as truth—the same which permits hundreds of clergymen to preach what they do not really believe, and thousands of listeners to pay outward reverence to symbols which for them have lost all meaning and all sanctity.

Every religious organization has sprung from an honest desire in the mind of some individual, or society of individ-

uals, to establish the practice of a morality above the standard of the age.

In every instance, the new Church, sect, order, or whatever it may be called, has been at first pure in motive and beneficent in action, and has afterward degenerated into a tool of political and spiritual tyranny, through increase of membership, and, consequently, of worldly possessions and social influence. And this is true, not only of state religions, but of all sects and subdivisions of sects which have struggled into recognition in spite of disabilities and persecutions.

The deed of corruption is the same in all—an attempt to postulate the unknowable in a creed, and a tendency to supersede the practice of morality by dogmatic belief and outward worship.

Whatever may be claimed as regards the good service rendered by the Church in past ages, it is plain that the world

has now outgrown its need of her ministrations, and will not much longer be deceived by her pretended mysteries.

If the idea of Deity and of a system of vicarious atonement be indeed the natural and necessary creation of the human mind, in view of its consciousness of imperfection and its ability to conceive of perfection, then it follows that the substitution of a low origin for a "fall," as the cause of universal imperfection, will do away with the significance of the creeds which have been based upon the latter theory.

It will be a great help to the race to get rid of the ancient superstition concerning the origin of evil. When men believe that "original sin" is only a tendency to return to the groveling habits of their undeveloped ancestry, that each generation has advanced beyond the average standard of its predecessor, and that there is no apparent limit to improve-

ment, they will be conscious of a stronger incentive to knowledge and right practice than was ever imparted by belief in an extraneous redemption and an undeserved heaven of beatitude.

The doctrine of a vicarious atonement has been productive of far more harm than good. Those gentle souls which have found most consolation in the theory are the very ones which least need such a refuge. To most men this corner-stone of Christianity has indeed proved "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense," inasmuch as it has lent new force to temptation through its promise of instant and complete forgiveness upon repentance, and its implied assurance that the natural consequences of wrong-doing shall also be averted from the transgressor.

The amount of evil resulting from this monstrous doctrine is incalculable. Not only are souls naturally noble and sin-

cere led astray thereby, to be taunted ever after by the horrible irony of a faith which promises to crown inevitable remorse with eternal peace; but the majority of inferior natures are led in deceitful security through lives of injustice, selfishness, and petty immorality by means of the same convenient sophistry.

No one can deny that the code of morals included in Christianity is a pure one. But Christianity, as a system of religion, is unable to enforce the moral duties it teaches; indeed, its practice is often in direct contradiction to its precepts. Gorgeous temples and fat benefices do not recall the simple doctrines and self-sacrificing career of the supposed founder of the faith; the leniency of the Church toward wickedness in high places, the comparative indifference of the Church to the wrongs of the poor, the ambition of the Church to meddle in affairs of State, the hostility of the

Church toward all measures of reform which threaten its authority or its revenues—all these things impress outsiders with the idea that this vast institution is of entirely human origin, and has become a powerful hindrance to human liberty and progress.

Christianity is not able to overcome the vices of society. Intemperance, licentiousness, inordinate luxury, are as prevalent in Christendom as in heathendom, and want and ignorance are everywhere productive of crime. Religious belief, of whatever kind, is not in itself a sufficient guide to right conduct. A good man is good because he practices morality; all the other qualities of his religion are, at best, harmless—at best, because there are few minds so well balanced as not to be made visionary and unpractical by the habitual contemplation of imaginary deities, and an imaginary future state, the conditions of

which are entirely different from those that govern existence upon earth.

For all purposes of intellectual recreation and spiritual elevation, the study of the visible wonders of the universe is sufficient, while the results of such observations and investigations are a positive benefit to mankind.

On the other hand, the habit of looking at the world from the standpoint of a future life is enervating to those who indulge in it, and a hindrance to the acquisition of real knowledge; while the laws and conditions of every religion that has yet been devised tend to weaken moral responsibility and to pervert the will as regards sincerity of conduct.

Religion displays a God, or Gods, who can be moved, by prayer, to interfere with the workings of the most obvious laws of nature; a Saviour able and willing to blot out on the instant

every sin which the penitent may have committed; a heaven standing open to all who repent and believe, though at the last gasp of a life spent in wickedness. And all these are offered to a race of beings taught to consider themselves as conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity, and certain to fall before temptation, unless protected by the miraculous interposition of an almighty but capricious power. To these fundamental errors are superadded the baleful influences of a priesthood and a Church, with all the superstitions and hypocrisies inevitably growing out of such an institution; and the product is the world as we see it, wiser and better than the world of the past, only in so far as secular knowledge has been able to overpower ecclesiastical ignorance.

The following extract, from a standard polemical work by a Protestant divine of the last century, contains a logical

deduction from accepted premises, and is a true summary of the doctrine of justification by faith:

“Even adultery and murder do not hurt the pleasant children, but rather work for their good. God sees no sin in believers, whatever sin they may commit. My sins might displease God; my person is always acceptable to him. Though I should outsin Manasses, I should not the less be a pleasant child, because God always views me in Christ.”

A suggestive contrast to the above statement is found in the following quotations from the Parsis' Catechism:

“There is no Saviour. In the other world you shall receive a recompense according to your actions. Your Saviour is your deeds, and God himself.”

“If any man commit sin under the belief that he shall be saved by somebody, both the deceiver and the deceived shall be damned to the day of Rasta Khez.”

Now the Parsis are celebrated the

world over for the purity and integrity of their conduct.

The Jews, also, who have never had a Redeemer, and who have no longer a Temple and sacrifices for sin, are an eminently moral people. Notwithstanding all their disadvantages, they are physically an exceptionally healthy race, and crime of all kinds is very rare among them.

They always take care of their own sick and poor, and it is not from among the children of Israel that houses of prostitution are supplied with either inmates or visitors.

Among all religions it will be found that those sects which lay more stress upon individual responsibility than upon Divine interposition are the most to be respected from a human standpoint.

Belief in the orthodox creed of Christendom, as in the expiatory systems of

heathendom, is necessarily demoralizing to the character.

The doctrine of the Trinity involves contradictions and absurdities which it is a shock to sincerity to accept, and a strong faith in the "Scheme of Redemption" is apt to render the conscience very elastic as regards truthfulness in temporal affairs.

Those persons who, while holding such a creed, have been able to carry through life a conscience void of offense, have either never been tempted by circumstances to test the value of a vicarious atonement, or have been blessed by nature with less of guile (and perhaps of logical faculty) than the majority of their fellows. To the race in general the gift of a Saviour, by means of whatever creed, has been a curse.

The maxim of Pythagoras, "*Reverence thyself*," is much better calculated to keep the conscience clear, and the stand-

ard of action high and pure, than is the theory of total depravity inculcated by the Christian system. The doctrine that man is of himself utterly unable to do any good thing is a monstrous libel upon human nature, and a seductive agent of evil in the presence of temptation. In its very best form, reliance upon an invisible power is weakening to the character. It tends to make men either timid or fanatical.

Luther's confidence in an Almighty Protector gave him the needed courage to face his enemies at Worms; but elsewhere this same belief betrayed him more than once into arrogance and unrighteous dealing. His passionately earnest words before the Diet, "*Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me! Amen,*" are justly treasured as among the most sublime and pathetic of human utterances. But when truth is to be defended at the peril of life, or of all that makes life desirable, it is still no-

bler and more brave to be able to say:
"Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise."

Christianity has not promoted peace; on the contrary, the bloodiest and most revengeful wars of Christendom have been religious wars.

Moreover, it must not be forgotten that Christianity has been established in many parts of the world through the power of the sword, and that the persecution of heretics has been a characteristic trait of the Church, both Catholic and Protestant, in every age. That persecution in our own time does not often extend to physical torture and actual destruction of life is not due to any change in Christianity itself, but solely to the more equal administration of justice through the influence of education.

Nor is it safe to assert that the spirit which can still maliciously disturb disbelievers and misbelievers in their pro-

perty, their influence, their domestic peace and their individual privacy—nay, which pursues them after death, and denies them honorable sepulture—may not again break out into the fiendish excesses of the past, should the future ever afford a like opportunity.

It is to the everlasting honor of Buddhism that, although equally missionary in spirit with Christianity, it has never resorted to persecution as a means of obtaining proselytes.

To say that Christianity is unable to conquer the cardinal vices of society—intemperance, licentiousness, luxury, war—is simply to say that Christianity, as a system of belief, has no power to alter the conditions which create those vices, because its theories tend to strengthen and perpetuate such conditions, and thereby to hinder the progress of the race.

Irresponsible power in Church or State

is sure to be attended with injustice and cruelty. The Golden Rule of all moralists, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," is the only safeguard for individuals and for communities. And this rule is independent of religious belief.

Not until the interests of property are conducted upon unselfish principles will the true balance between Capital and Labor be discovered.

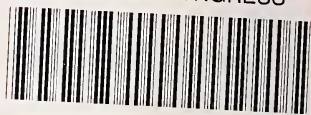
Not until the laws which govern the reproduction of the human species are fully understood and wisely obeyed will the race attain its highest development.

Through the practice of morality according to the ever advancing standard of each generation, man will at last arrive at the solution of all social problems, and be able to remove all obstacles to his perfection and consequent happiness.

THE END.



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